Louisiana

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Tobacco

Chapter in America's Industrial Growth

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more than 26,000 retail outlets that distribute these products in the state representing more than $185 million in sales at the retail level. Wholesale sales of cigarettes alone amounted to more than $110 million in 1972.

Taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products are substantial in Louisiana where the state government collected more than $52 million in 1972. About $37 million went to federal tax collections for cigarettes sold in the "Pelican State."

Production of Perique tobacco in Louisiana has become more than just another agricultural industry . . . it is a true Louisiana tradition. The flavor of the history and background of Type 72 is as aromatic as the best of tobaccos. This booklet attempts to trace that history and to describe a farm process that has changed little since Pierre Chenet developed Perique from the Indians who once inhabited what is now St. James Parish.

Tobacco History Series
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Louisiana and Tobacco

The Spanish were probably the first Europeans to explore the area now called Louisiana. A 1530 expedition followed by a later visit by Hernando de Soto in 1541 opened the area to the interest of the Spaniards. The French entered the scene in the 17th century and in 1682 Robert de la Salle claimed for France all the land drained by the Mississippi River and its tributaries. He named part of this territory Louisiana in honor of the French King Louis XIV.

The French took the reins of control in the area and immediately stressed the importance of growing tobacco. England had been selling large quantities of tobacco grown in its American colonies to France, and the latter had a great desire to escape this dependence. Louisiana, many French officials felt, could be the answer.

Colonial French tobacco did prosper but later political events brought the area into the control of Spain and, eventually, the United States of America.

Tobacco agriculture remains today as a fascinating activity of farmers in St. James Parish, direct descendants of 18th century Acadian settlers, and particularly one of them, Pierre Chenet, whose nickname, "Perique," is used to identify the distinct, aromatic type of tobacco grown only in the parish.

TOBACCO AGRICULTURE IN LOUISIANA TODAY

A field of healthy Perique just prior to harvest

Grande Pointe

Perique is grown on the east bank of the Mississippi River above New Orleans in a small area in St. James Parish near the little French towns of Paulina, Belmont, Grammercy, Remy, Lutcher, Convent and Grande Pointe. Nearby is a triangular area running along the river for about ten miles or so, extending its point for about three miles into swampland believed to be particularly suited for this pungent tobacco. This bit of land, known as the *vacherie of Grande Pointe* is, as the name implies, an island raised about four or five feet above the surrounding swamp. The soil of the *vacherie* is a calcareous loam, chocolate in color and of great fertility. It has long been found best suited to the production of Perique.

A family project

Producing Perique tobacco is no easy task. Some of the methods of production have changed slightly over the years with the help of mechanization, but, generally, it is a time consuming task of hand labor essentially the same as it was two centuries ago.

Perique was once a relatively large, thriving industry that was spread out all over St. James Parish. Today, with the introduction of sugar cane and heavy industry into the area, many would-be tobacco farmers have abandoned their tobacco trade for more lucrative occupations. Nonetheless, the crop is still harvested year in and year out.

A typical Perique tobacco curing barn

It is a family project. Children and adults from several families work together during the growing season, including profitable summer employment for the youngsters, and share the benefits of harvest and sale later in the year. Some local residents report, however, that as is the case with other types of agriculture, the future of the Perique industry may be in jeopardy because of the tendency of young people to seek higher education and steady employment in metropolitan localities distant from the parish.

From the hot bed to the field

Perique seeds are microscopic in size. A thimble can contain about 100,000 seeds, the measure used for enough seed to sow an acre of land.

The Perique farmer begins the production process in early December by sowing seeds in hot beds which

are then covered with clear plastic and framed by a protective wooden box.

About a week later the seeds begin to germinate. The seedlings must be meticulously cared for to assure them enough sun and water without overexposure to the sometimes radical winter elements of southern Louisiana. The beds are covered at night and uncovered during the day so they can soak up the energy the sun provides.

In early March, when the best of the small seedlings are about three to four inches high, they should be pulled from the beds and transplanted into the fields. The transplanting process can take place as late as May, but the Perique farmer reminds us that the earlier the tobacco is put into the field the better it will be. (Because of flooding and excess rain, the crop was set out late in 1973 and it was feared it could amount to even less than that of 1972 when Hurricane Agnes plowed through St. James Parish leaving a path of destruction in its wake).

A labor intensive task

The Perique farmer undergoes much expense and worry during the growing season. Fertilizer, insecticide, barrels, nails, and other material must be purchased to maintain his tobacco farm. The amounts of labor and worry that go into a crop vary each year as farmers adjust to the different reactions of nature.

A 1972 cost estimate, according to the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, showed that the St. James Parish tobacco farmer had to spend $537.87 to care for each acre of tobacco he planted.

When the plants reach a height of about two feet they must be "topped" to redistribute the growth toward the bottom part of the plant. The topping process means removal of the uppermost portion of the plant where the flower would normally blossom. If the plants were allowed to grow freely they would reach a height of six feet. The quality of the leaves would be evenly spread throughout the plant and they would not be as rich and concentrated as they are after being topped.

As the plants mature, another laborious chore must be performed. Suckers, or small shoots which grow in the axes of the leaves and suck sap from the mother plant, must be removed when they are three or four inches long so that they will not inhibit the growth and health of the plant.

During the stemming process, women hand remove the main stems of the leaves and tie the leaves into bundles of about a pound each before the tobacco is packed into barrels for several months.

Researchers have helped growers of most other types of tobacco by providing a chemical that will inhibit the growth of suckers. Not so with Perique. Louisiana State University has experimented with such chemicals and found that they do not work on Perique. The age-old process of hand-removing suckers is still part of the tedious process of producing Perique.

"Fabrique" to the curing barn

A few weeks after the plant has been "suckered," ideally in early July, the harvest begins. Known as *fabrique* to farmers whose native tongue is French, the harvest is another difficult and time consuming job.

Early in the evening, around four o-clock, the more mature plants are cut off at the base and laid on the ground. The next morning, after the dew has dried and the plant is limber enough to handle without breakage, it is taken from the field to the curing barn.

At the barn, a nail is driven into each stalk on an angle so that it can be hung on wires running along the ceiling where the air is warm and there is little air flow.

In about 12 days the leaves have become dry and gold in color. They are taken down, stripped from the stalks and beaten on barrels to remove dust. The tobacco is then dampened by sprinkling water on the leaves. This is a delicate process because too much water will rot the leaves and not enough will cause the tobacco to dry out and not "cure" properly. The damp tobacco is then piled and allowed to soften before "stemming" begins.

Pressure applied to the curing tobacco eventually amounts to about 30 tons.

Stemming is usually the task of women, who sit around a table and rip the center stem from each leaf. They tie the stemmed leaves into small bundles weighing about a pound each. These bundles replace the old *torquettes* (bundles of leaves twisted together) as they are easier to handle without falling apart.

The tobacco bundles are placed in large, reinforced, oak barrels lined with waxed paper. Gradually over a period of several days up to about 30 tons of pressure are applied by use of a large jack screw (pictured in this section) which requires the strength of at least two men to turn. The high pressure causes the tobacco to secrete a gummy juice which acts as a preservative in the fermentation process.

From barn to buyer

After about a month of pressure, the barrel is opened and its approximately 500 pounds of fermenting tobacco are removed to be rehandled, softened and repacked. By the end of the year, after this process has been repeated once more, the tobacco is ready for sale. It has turned color from amber to dark brown or black. It is highly aromatic and sweet smelling.

Currently, there are only two Perique dealers in the world, both located in St. James Parish. These two buy the tobacco from the farmers after it has been inspected and weighed. In 1972 Perique farmers sold about 120,000 pounds at an average of 86 cents per pound. The total crop value came to about $103,000 collected by the parish's 25 farmers.

Before the buyer ships the tobacco to manufacturers, it is rehandled, repacked, put under pressure to ferment further, and blended with other tobaccos according to his specific instructions. The aroma and body of the finished product is appraised by blenders much like the aroma and body of wine is evaluated by an expert. The Perique is carefully nurtured and watched during its months of fermentation. Because

of its strength and full body, it is used for the most part as a "seasoning" in a full blend. It takes only a small amount of Perique to "flavor" the other tobaccos used in a final mixture.

The buyer keeps his tobacco for almost a year before it is ready for export overseas and to a few, domestic users. At the end of a year's storage, the tobacco is rechecked, weighed and shipped. The United States Department of Agriculture reports that for 1972, tobacco exports included 280,000 pounds of Perique,

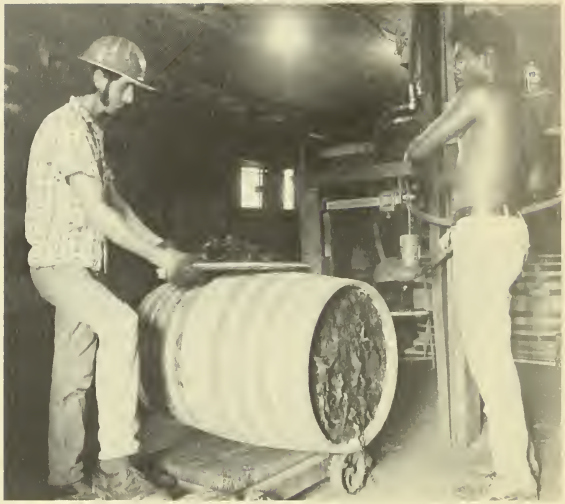
Barrels of Perique fermenting under pressure in the curing barn.

Two warehouse employees blending Perique with "Kentucky" and "Honduras" tobaccos for an overseas buyer.

valued at $293,000. This included, of course, Perique on storage from several previous years. Most of the tobacco exported went to Great Britain. Other importing countries included West Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Canada and Australia.

Wholesalers and retailers

The tobacco industry in Louisiana contributed to the state's economy by ways other than just plant cultivation. There are 22,000 retail outlets in the state which distribute cigarettes and other tobacco products representing about $184.5 million in sales in 1972. At the wholesale level, sales of tobacco products came to more than $110 million.



Cured Perique, the finished product, is inspected for quality and weighed in preparation for delivery to the buyer. The filled barrel weighs about 500 pounds.

The tax burden

Ever since a federal tax was established on manufactured tobacco, the various tobacco products have been heavily taxed. The tax on finished commodities was first applied in 1862. Cigarettes were included in

this tax in 1864. Since the inception of the tobacco excise the total yield to the United States Treasury through June 1972 has been about $64 billion.

The current federal rate on each package of 20 cigarettes is eight cents. It was "temporarily" raised from seven cents in 1952. Louisiana consumers contributed about $37 million of the $2.2 billion collected on tobacco products by the Internal Revenue Service in fiscal 1972, most of it from cigarettes.

The cigarette excise imposed by the state of Louisiana is an additional 11 cents per package. The original tax on cigarettes in the state, four cents, became effective in 1925. It has been increased three times to the present rate and has remained at that rate since August 1970. In addition to the state excise, Louisiana imposes a three percent sales tax which adds an additional penny to the price of Louisiana-purchased cigarettes. The total yield to the state from all taxes on tobacco products since the inception of the first tobacco tax in 1925 through June 1973 is estimated by tobacco trade authorities at $861 million.

The average retail price of a package of cigarettes in Louisiana is 40 cents. A full 20 cents, or 50 percent of the retail price, is destined to end up in federal and state treasuries. Funds from cigarette and other tobacco revenues benefit all—smokers and nonsmokers alike—and their effect is visible through construction and maintenance of schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and in community services.

Much more could be said about the aggregate tobacco industry based in Louisiana. The essential facts serve to demonstrate the magnitude and importance of the industry in the "Pelican State." The history of tobacco's growth there is both unique and fascinating.

A painting of "old glory" being hoisted in New Orleans to replace the French flag in 1803 when the U.S. purchased Louisiana territory from Napoleon.

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOBACCO IN LOUISIANA

European entrenchment

The land acquisitions made by explorer Robert de La Salle for France in 1682 gave that country a powerful position in the "New World." For La Salle claimed for France all the land drained by the mighty Mississippi River and its tributaries.

La Salle's dreams of a French empire in the lower Mississippi region were taken up by two brothers, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, in 1699 when they established a settlement at Biloxi, now in the state of Mississippi. In 1712, Louis XIV of France granted the territory of Louisiana to Antoine Crozat, a wealthy French merchant who controlled the area for five years.

In 1717, Crozat surrendered his charter and Phillipe II, who was Duke of Orleans and the regent of France, granted Louisiana to John Law's Company of the West for an intended 25 years. (Law, a famous Scottish financier and speculator was a close friend of the regent.) Although the territory failed to prosper under the Company of the West, New Orleans was founded during this time and became the territorial capital. In 1733, Louisiana became a French Crown Colony and remained so until 1765 when it was taken by Spain as a Spanish Royal Colony.

In competition with the British

The tobacco industry got its start in Louisiana under the reins of the Company of the West. In 1719, 30

slave laborers were brought to the colony for the expressed purpose of cultivating and manufacturing tobacco in the Natchez district. A scale of tobacco prices was fixed and other regulations were set up to control the industry at that time.

By 1722 a considerable amount of tobacco was being produced, mostly around Natchez, from which a thousand hogsheads were sent to the Continent that year in competition with the English tobacco trade. Were it not for an acute lack of slave labor, much more tobacco would have been produced in that area.

Realizing that the labor shortage was fast becoming critical, then Governor Perier was instructed to give preference to tobacco growers in the distribution of slaves. Furthermore, the Company of the West provided special price inducements to new growers and

A "bird's eye" view of New Orleans and the busy Mississippi River traffic, circa *1851.*

to those on the point of abandoning the industry. Apparently, these measures were of some help, for by 1729, Louisiana tobacco farmers were producing an annual crop of more than 300,000 pounds.

The French mercantilists, of course, had no idea that Louisiana would change hands so many times and eventually become part of a nation that was yet to be formed. However, they had great hopes for the territory during the middle part of the 18th century.

An indication of this lies in a statement made by an Englishman who traveled through Louisiana and later wrote:

> *This is an advantage they* [the French growers] *have in Louisiana over our tobacco planters, who are prohibited by law to cultivate these seconds, the summers are so short, that they do not come to due maturity, in our colonies; whereas in Louisiana the summers are two to three months longer, by which they make two or three crops of tobacco a year upon the same ground, as easily as we make one. Add to this, their fresh lands will produce three times as much of that commodity as our old plantations which are now worn out with culture, by supplying the whole world almost with tobacco for a hundred and fifty years.*

He went on further to speculate:

> *. . . They may, with all these advantages, soon get this trade from us, the only prime one this nation has left entire to itself. These advantages enable the planters to give a much better price for servants and slaves, and thereby to engross the trade . . . and by remov-*

ing from Canada to Louisiana their own emigrants, they may in the like manner get not only this but every other branch of the trade of North America.

Similarly, a French writer spoke of Louisiana's important tobacco industry when he said:

Tobacco is the only production of the earth which gives the English an advantage over us. Providence, which reserved for us the discovery of Louisiana, has given us the possession of it, that we may be their rivals in this particular, or at least that we may be able to do without their tobacco.

"Thick and succulent"

The French were hopeful that the Louisiana tobacco trade would put them out of the business of importing English tobacco altogether and thus would develop a balance of trade more favorable to France.

The European settlers carefully examined the tobacco trade as handled by local Indians. Le Page de Pratz, a French traveler and writer who lived in Louisiana for fifteen years, noted in his writings that the "tobacco which was found among the Indians of Louisiana . . . is very large." He went on to describe it more carefully:

. . . Its stalk, when suffered to run to seed, shoots to five and a half to six feet; the lower part of its stem is at least eighteen lines in diameter, and its leaves often near two feet long, which are often thick and succulent, its juice is strong but never disorders the head.

This 1873 engraving depicts New Orleans harbor as an obviously busy commercial port.

Du Pratz further wrote that after the leaves were stripped from the stalk, he experimented by tying them into bundles, wrapping them in a cloth and letting them alone for 24 hours.

"This tobacco turned so black and waxy," he said, "that it could not be rasped [grated for use in smoking] in less than a year; but then it had a substance and flavor so much the more agreeable, as it never affected the head; and I sold it for double the price of the common."

History records that the planters of the Natchez

district packed their tobacco into hogsheads after the fashion of the Atlantic seaboard districts. But planters elsewhere in Louisiana put the leaf in *carottes*, or rolls of tobacco, made by covering a bundle of leaves with canvas, and rolling the bundle into a hard cylinder about 15 inches long, four inches thick and weighing about four pounds, using a winch that drew rope around the roll. After several days, the rope was removed and rewound to assure its tightness so that the tobacco would not too easily dry out.

After the *carotte* dried and its shape was fixed, the cloth was removed and strips of bark were attached at intervals along the *carotte* to help protect it. The tobacco was flatboated down the Mississippi to New Orleans, inspected at a public warehouse and prepared for overseas shipment. The tobacco was rarely turned down by warehouse inspectors because of the customary *douceur* discreetly dropped into the inspector's pocket. This "gratuity" became a well established practice and was not considered a bribe.

The descriptions of much of the colonial tobacco by French authorities of the time make it clear that Louisiana tobacco grown two hundred years ago was quite similar to the Perique cultivated today.

But the time was not yet ripe for the steady growth of the tobacco industry. The middle to latter part of the 18th century saw great international turmoil and strife that had tremendous impact on the area as it changed hands several times.

Under Spanish domain

As the French and Indian War came to a close, Spain won control of Louisiana. Under the Spanish, Louisi-

ana took an active part in the American Revolution in behalf of the colonies. The Spanish reoccupied plantations that the British had temporarily taken and reunited tobacco areas in the Natchez region. The Spanish authorities encouraged the growth of tobacco and promised good prices to its cultivators, hoping to sell it to the French and to the Mexican Monopoly.

By the end of the American Revolution, the Spanish government in Louisiana was deeply involved in the tobacco business with up to two million pounds being shipped annually from the port of New Orleans.

Wilkinson and the Spanish curtain

A complex problem was in the making, however, causing increasing friction between American tobacco growers to the north and the Spanish authorities. Tobacco from Kentucky, Tennessee and surrounding areas could easily be floated down the Mississippi River and shipped out of the port of New Orleans, but the Spanish tightly controlled the port's exports and prohibited shipment of any northern tobacco. Thus much of this tobacco was bottlenecked with no feasible outlet.

What was needed was a promotion man, both a diplomat and salesman to help open Louisiana to the American tobacco trade. He turned up in the form of one James Wilkinson, an American general who had served with Benedict Arnold during the Quebec campaign.

In 1786 Wilkinson conceived the idea of breaking the export barrier the Spanish government had set up at Natchez and New Orleans. His expedition set out from Frankfort, Kentucky with a full load of tobacco

and arrived in Natchez during the summer of 1787. As was expected, his entourage was siezed, but his quick tongue and some generous bribery convinced the Spanish authorities that they should promptly release his boats and crews. He sent the boats on to New Orleans and when he arrived himself in late June or early July, he found that his materials had again been confiscated.

An associate of Wilkinson is believed to have told Don Esteban Miro, the governor of Louisiana, that the seizure could lead to an angry invasion by Kentuckians. He reportedly suggested that Wilkinson might encourage this, in light of the known frustration of Kentucky planters who were not receiving help from the U.S. government with shipping problems, and that by working with Wilkinson Louisiana might be able to help

Steamboats became a famous, if not vital, part of Louisiana river trade along the Mississippi in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This photograph was made around 1910.

separate the area to the north from the Union and make it a new Spanish province.

Wilkinson and his contacts thus wooed the governor into releasing his materials. The episode has become known to historians as the "Spanish Intrigue."

History does not prove whether Wilkinson's motives were devious, or whether he was purely interested in his own prosperity. In any event, the fact remains that he did open the port of New Orleans to the tobacco trade and other American industries. But he was only fooling himself if he thought he alone would profit from this new commercial agreement.

It came as a great shock to Wilkinson when a royal order issued in Seville in December 1788 permitted all Americans to enter goods at Mississippi River ports on payment of the Spanish entry duty.

But new problems arose by 1790. The New Orleans market was glutted and the Spanish had to limit the amount of tobacco they would allow to enter the ports. Much of it was literally rotting on the docks while awaiting sale and shipment.

It was late in 1791 that Wilkinson, "disgusted by disappointment and misfortunes, the effect of my ignorance of commerce," abandoned his export trade business and reentered the United States Army.

Nova Scotia to Louisiana

Meanwhile, about the same time the Declaration of Independence was being written in Philadelphia, a band of four to five thousand Acadians of French descent were forced to leave Nova Scotia because of religious persecution. A little over two hundred of

this group, whose direct descendants today cultivate tobacco in St. James Parish, came to Louisiana and took refuge in the Bayou Teche region.

The area was largely a wilderness. Its Indian inhabitants, however, the Choctaw and Chickasaw, had been cultivating a tobacco that was of interest to the new Acadian settlers.

Among these, legend has it, was a man named Pierre Chenet, nick-named "Perique," who undertook to learn all he could about tobacco from the Indians. The story is told that they had an ingenious method of curing tobacco. A stump was hollowed and placed on end. Leaves of tobacco which had been dried for a few days were made into twists and packed tightly into the stump. When the stump was filled, pressure was applied to the contents by means of a lever fixed at one end in a notch in the stump, while the other end was weighted down with heavy stone. The resulting steady pressure drove the vital juices from the leaves and caused the tobacco to ferment and mellow.

When the pressure was removed, the twists were taken out, aired, and then put under pressure again. This process continued until the desired mellowness and aroma had been achieved. With the exception of some mechanical improvements, this is the same process used for making Perique today.

Fact or fiction

This story, like all folklore, is an elusive mixture of fact and fancy. Legends grow profusely along the bayous of Louisiana and those concerned with Perique are plentiful. Thus, this is by no means the only story

about the origin of Perique tobacco. Research in the French and Spanish archives may convince one that either the French or the Spanish developed this special fermenting process, but the story of the man called "Perique" is certainly a matter of popular belief.

Territory to statehood

By 1800 the fate of Louisiana was again unsure. That year, Napoleon I signed the Treaty of San Ildefonso, and among other things Spain was required to retrocede Louisiana to France. Three years later Napoleon, in turn, sold the territory to the United States of America for a mere $15 million.

In March 1804, the U.S. Congress divided the "Louisiana Purchase," as it was called, into two parts. The area north of thirty-three degrees latitude (the Louisiana-Arkansas border today) and west of the Mississippi River was called the "Territory of Louisiana" (later changed to Missouri territory). The area south of thirty-three degrees was called the "Territory of Orleans" and on April 30, 1812 was admitted to the Union as the state of Louisiana.

Meanwhile, a dispute arose between the U.S. and Spain, with the latter contending that its retrocession to France did not include "West Florida"—the area which today includes eastern Louisiana, southern Mississippi and Alabama. In 1810, the residents of Baton Rouge, which was a part of "West Florida" and still under the reins of Spain, revolted and proclaimed the independent Republic of West Florida. In 1812, Con-

gress legislated this region, west of the Pearl River and south of thirty-one degrees north latitude, into American domain as part of Louisiana. Today, this area is called the Florida Parishes.

The shaded area was the subject of dispute between Spain and the United States. The Spanish contended that it was not included in the "Louisiana Purchase" from Napoleon.

Throughout the early 19th Century, Americans herded into Louisiana. French influence, however, remained strong. Both the French and English languages were officially used there until 1898. Today, Louisiana is unique among the states in basing its state laws upon the Napoleonic Code.

From prosperity to war

Sugar planting expanded rapidly in the 1800's and Louisiana's industry and commerce became a bulwark of the South. New Orleans, despite constant floods and epidemics, grew and prospered during the steamboat era. Both river and rail commerce made New Orleans one of the most important and influential ports in the country. Many persons became rich, as indicated by the huge, now old and romantic columned mansions on the plantations scattered throughout the region. But this affluence was short-lived.

Louisiana seceded from the Union on January 26, 1862, to join the Confederacy in an attempt to sustain the South's economic dependence on slavery. The state provided significant manpower to the Confederacy during the War Between the States, including two of the most famous generals of the time, Bragg and Beauregard. But Union forces invaded the state in 1862 and demolished its industry. After the War, the Reconstruction period was as depressive and devastating to Louisiana as it was to most other southern states. Political strife, racial conflict and economic confusion were rampant. Economic conditions were deplorable when Louisiana was readmitted to the Union in July of 1868. Until as late as 1900 the great problem facing most of

its people there was finding adequate food, clothing and shelter. Compulsory education laws were not passed until 1916.

Economic boom

At the turn of the century, the state's economy began to revitalize. Salt was mined at Avery's Island. Northern investors came to harvest timber and erect sawmills. Oil was discovered at Jennings in 1901 and near Shreveport in 1906. Commercial mining of sulphur also began around the same time.

"Manresa" retreat house, owned and operated by the Jesuit order in Convent, La., was built in 1831 as a nonsectarian college for the sons of wealthy Louisiana planters. The three-story plantation house has 22 columns in an unbroken row across its main facade. Bought by Valcour Aime in 1859, it was reopened as Louisiana College. During the War Between the States it was used as a Union barracks.

The farmers in St. James Parish continued to produce tobacco, year in and year out, although not nearly in the magnitude of North Carolina and Kentucky, for example. But the demand remained for Perique.

In 1919, for example, Perique farmers produced 348,000 pounds at a very high price for the time, 65 cents per pound. In 1922, they produced a record 478,000 pounds valued at 55 cents per pound. During the Depression years, production and prices fluctuated and fell. In 1934, production of only 35,000 pounds was valued at 20 cents per pound. In 1941 the price bottomed at 17 cents.

"Tabac de Perique"

Perique prices have substantially increased since 1941, but during the past few years farmers, plagued with disastrous weather, have tended to turn to other agricultural industries in the area which have overshadowed tobacco. Yet the "art" of cultivating Perique is in the blood of the people who grow it and remains firmly entrenched in their way of life.

For *tabac de Perique* is unique. The demand for its superb quality as a blend, providing aroma and flavor that cannot be provided by any other type of tobacco in the world, has never ceased. The term *fabrique* may be foreign to many, but for the Perique farmers of St. James Parish it represents a way of life that has evolved from a heritage of proud, hard working men and women who will continue to supply the world with this highly cherished agricultural product.

Data on the current tobacco industry in Louisiana have been supplied by the Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture; the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service; and by the Tobacco Tax Council, Richmond, Va.

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The quotations on pages 17 and 18 are from Le Page du Pratz and can be found in the Arents Collections, New York Public Library, the Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. The quotation on p. 23 is from *The Kentucky River Navigation*, Mary Verhoeff (Filson Club, 1917).

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